

Mickey



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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BOARD OF FINANCE

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PUBLIC HEARING 2008-09 BUDGET TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2008 ELLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

Board of Finance Members Present: Robert Clements-Chmn, Richard Cleary, Mark Joyse, Barry Pinto, Joseph Wehr, Michael Varney

Others Present: N. DiCorleto-Fin Officer, M. Stupinski-First Selectman, S. Cullinan-Superintendent of Schools, Town and School Officials, Residents

Chairman Robert Clements opened the hearing at 8:05 PM.

Mr. Clements stated that this is the preliminary budget before any deliberations. It contains Board of Selectmen recommended capital expenditures that need to be funded. In previous years, items were severely cut back so that the needs now are critical. Department Heads are now required to do a 5 year plan so that any surprises will be eliminated. The Board of Finance held budget hearings through the month of March and published the budget on 3/28/08. Budget deliberations will be held on Tuesday, April 22 and Thursday, April 24 at the Town Hall at 7:30. The annual town meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2008 at the High School.

Ellington is a fast growing town and the grand list grew last year by 3.4% or \$40,302,186. That equates to an additional \$987,403 in revenue. The tax revenue is based on a 98% collection rate. In 2006, \$173,583 more in revenue was collected than budgeted.

Projected State revenues for 2008/09 are down. This year's Education Cost Sharing Grant will be 34.60%. In the 2001/02 fiscal year there were 2,206 students. As of October 2007 there were 2,597 students and the projection for next year is 2,620. The total budget for 2007-08 was \$41,420,289 which was an increase of .81% to 24.5 mills. This budget as it stands now is \$44,780,986 or .6 mill increase which would bring the current mill rate to 25.1 or a 2.44% increase.

The town continues to replace equipment and maintain its infrastructure. We are replacing debt for debt without increasing taxes. Capital expenditures continue to be bonded as well as purchased from the budget. The town is continuing to use the lease/purchase option rather than budgeting large items over three years. This way increases in the cost of the item do not affect the town.

The town is in a strong financial position with a capital reserve fund balance of \$2,306,146. Each year the Board of Finance sets aside funds in a contingency account for unforeseen emergencies. At the end of the fiscal year, the balance is transferred to the capital reserve fund. As of 6/30/08 the fund will have \$2,547,684, which is 6% of the operating budget. Having this fund contributes to the sound financial position of the town resulting in a better bond rating from Moody's for bond purchases.

Last year the taxpayers approved a .2 mill rate increase. This budget as it stands is a .6 mill rate increase. The general government budget is \$14,694,980 which is an increase of \$856,873 or 6.19% increase. Board of Education budget is \$28,560,931 which is an increase of \$1,834,435 or 6.86%, the capital improvement budget is \$1,525,035 which is an increase of \$618,889 or 68% increase.

Increases in the grand list and Education Cost Sharing Grant are reflected in this budget. The Board of Finance will attempt to close the gap between the revenues and expenses. The Board will also revisit the revenues. The Board will take into consideration the needs of the community, the taxpayers, and open space concerns. Open Space is a concern that has moved up on the priority list. Senior citizen's housing is inadequate. In the year 2012, 8,500 people per day will turn 65 years old. This is a matter that will have to be dealt with. The Library is an excellent facility with a very capable director but the wages for the workers need to be brought up to a fair level. A three year phase out of the Pay for Play and funding for unfunded sports is included in the Board of Education budget.

In closing, Mr. Clements urged anyone interested in volunteering to be on a board or commission to contact the First Selectman's office. He then opened the floor for questions or comments.

Rich Gelsomino, 26 Maplewood Drive, President of the football boosters, stated that football has been funded 95% by the boosters and pay for play program. He also told the Board that it is getting harder and harder to get the donations necessary to fund the program. He spoke in favor of the Board of Education's three year funding plan to pay for unfunded sports programs. He felt that the football program could be in jeopardy in 2009 if this item does not pass.

Tami Miller, 10 Gasek Farms Rd, stated that she is the president of the Ellington Athletic Boosters and that their group also supports the three year funding plan. She stated that a petition campaign is underway and her group is campaigning to get the parents out to vote for the budget.

Tom Stauffer, 10 Moser Drive stated that this was a good budget and he supports the restoration of the funding of unfunded sports. He also urged the Board to increase the funding for the Senior Center and Human Services.

Peter Charter, 516 Somers Rd stated that he wanted to speak against the addition to the Ambulance building. Mr. Stupinski told him that he was out of order because this is not a budget item. Only budget items were being discussed at the hearing.

Dave Bedson, 8 Cranberry Lane also spoke in support of the board's funding of unfunded sports programs and urged the Board of Education not to cut this item should their budget received cuts.

Leo Miller, 36 Hillsdale Drive stated that the problem is that parent are not supporting the budget and would like to see all the programs at the schools receiving the support that has been shown here tonight for the sports funding.

Mr. Clements reiterated that the deliberations are scheduled for April 22 and 24 at Town Hall. He closed the hearing at 8:45 pm.

Submitted by


Lori Smith, Clerk